

## Message Text

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SUBJ: GOS ATTENTION TO BASQUE ISSUE

REF: BILBAO 039

SUMMARY: FIRST VICE PRESIDENT AND INTERIOR MINISTER, GARCIA HERNANDEZ, SPENT FOUR DAYS WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN BASQUE PROVINCES APRIL 11-15 IN WAKE OF ARREST OF 15 LEFTIST EXTREMISTS, PETITION EFFORT BY 47,000 SIGNATORIES TO DISMISS MAYOR OF BILBAO, AND UNSUCCESSFUL APPEAL FOR GENERAL STRIKE ON OCCASION OF "DAY OF STRUGGLE" APRIL 1. GARCIA HERNANDEZ MET WITH LOCAL MAYORS AND ASSURED THEM THAT PRESENT REGIME WAS NOT "TIED BIOLOGICALLY" TO FRANCO AND, WITH HIS DEPARTURE, EVERYTHING WOULD NOT CHANGE; MEANWHILE, GOS WOULD CONTINUE GRADUAL DEMOCRATIZATION OF LOCAL GOVT WITH ELECTION OF MUNICIPAL LEADERS. GARCIA HERNANDEZ, HEAD OF MOST POWERFUL NON-MILITARY MINISTRY IN GOVT, HAS BECOME MOST IMPORTANT POLITICAL FIGURE IN CABINET AFTER PREMIER ARIAS HIMSELF, PARTICULARLY AS ARIAS' BEHIND-THE-SCENES ADVISOR AND AS LEADING TOP LEVEL PROPONENT OF FIOIESS ON LAW AND ORDER ISSUE. END SUMMARY

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1. JOSE GARCIA HERNANDEZ, FIRST VICE PRESIDENT AND MINISTER

OF INTERIOR (WHO CONTROLS CIVIL GUARD, ARMED POLICE AND SECUREWIPGICE), VISITED BASQUE PROVINCES OF NAVARRE, GUIPUZCOA, AND VISCAYA APRIL 11-15. DIRGENS OF INTERNAL POLICY, LOCAL ADMINISTRATION, AND SECURITY ACCOMPANIED HIM. IN PAMPLONA, SAN SEBASTIAN, AND BILBAO, GARCIA HERNANDEZ TALKED WITH LOCAL GOVT, MOVEMENT, AND SYNDICAL LEADERS AS WELL AS WITH ASSEMBLIES OF ALL LOCAL MAYORS.

2. MAIN THEMES OF GARCIA HERNANDEZ' SPEECHES, STATEMENTS, OR REPLIES TO QUERIES WERE FOLLOWING:

A. GOS RESPECTED SPECIAL NAVARRAN LOCAL CHARTER (FUERO), ADDING THAT ISN NAVARRE "DECENTRALIZATION" WAS NOT INTERPRETED IN WRONG WAY AS IT TENDS TO BE ELSEWHERE

B. PROPOSED LAW ON LOCAL GOVT UNDER STUDY IN "CORTES" WOULD PROVIDE FOR DIRECT ELECTION BY RESIDENTS OF MUNICIPAL COUNCILMEN WHO IN TURN WOULD ELECT MAYORS. GOS WOULD CONTINUE PROGRAM LEADING TO BROADER DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION AT LOCAL LEVEL.

C. GOS, WHILE IN FAVOR OF BROAD DIALOGUE AND LIBERLIZATION (APERTURA), WOULD NOT ENTER INTO CONTACT WITH SUBVERSIVE GROUPS SUCH AS COMMUNIST PARTY.

D. PRESENT POLITICAL SITUATION IS NOT TIED BIOLOGICALLY TO FRANCO'S EXISTENCE: THOSE WHO BELIEVE THAT EVERYTHING WILL CHANGE WITH HIS PASSING ARE WRONG.

E. PROBLEM OF DISSIDENT PRIESTS IN PAMPLONA IS SYMPTOMATIC OF GENERAL PROBLEM OF CHURCH WHICH, AS "SOVERIGN SOCIETY", HAS TO SOLVE ITS OWN PROBLEMS. INsofar AS THESE PROBLEMS SPILL OVER INTO CIVIL SECTOR, GOS IS OBLIGATED TO TAKE ACTIONS WHICH IT WOULD PREFER NOT TO. (REFERENCE IS TO ARREST OR FINING OVER PAST YEARS OF NUMBERS OF BASQUE PRIESTS FOR SERMONS CONSIDERED SUBVERSIVE).

F. PEACE IS "SINE QUE NON" FOR EXERCISE OF POLITICAL LIBERTIES, POSSIBILITY OF POLITICAL EVOLUTION, AND PROVISION OF PUBLIC SERVICES.

3. MINISTER'S VISIT CAME ON HEELS OF SERIES OF WELL PUBLICIZED INCIDENTS IN BASQUE AREA. ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF "DAY OF THE FATHERLAND" (ABERRI EGUNA) AT GUERNICA LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MARCH 30 WAS OCCASION FOR EXCEPTIONALLY EXTENSIVE POLICE SECURITY MEASURES. THESE MEASURES WERE PARTIALLY CONSEQUENCE OF KILLING OF POLICE INSPECTOR MAR 29 AND INFO THAT EXTREMIST GROUPS WANTED TO REPEAT SUCCESS OF "DAY OF STRUGGLE" HELD IN BASQUE PROVINCE S LAST DEC 11 (MADRID 7851). ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL FIGURES AND IMPARTIAL OBSERVERS, ONLY 5,000 WORKERS STOPPED WORK APR 1 WHEREAS MORE THAN 100,000 PARTICIPATED IN THE DECEMBER STRIKE.

4. CIVIL GOVERNOR OF VISCAYA, WHO REPORTS TO MINISTER OF INTERIOR, TURNED BACK BECAUSE OF TECHNICALITY APRIL 9 PETITION SIGNED BY 46,134 CITIZENS DEMANDING REMOVAL OF BILBAO MAYOR LEQUERICA. TWENTY-SEVEN LOCAL FAMILY ASSOCIATIONS, WHICH ORGANIZED PETITION, REPORTEDLY SUBMITTED NEW PETITION TO CIVIL GOVERNOR APR 14.

5. GOS ANNOUNCED APRIL 11, DAY OF GARCIA HERNANDEZ' ARRIVAL IN PAMPLONA, THAT 15 MEMBERS OF SUBVERSIVE GROUPS HAD BEEN ARRESTED BY BILBAO POLICE. THOSE ARRESTED BELONG TO EITHER THE COMMUNIST REVOLUTIONARY LEAGUE-ETA VIA OF TO A NEW AND PREVIOUSLY UNHEARD OF GROUP CALLED SPANISH REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS PARTY (PORE), AND WERE ACCUSED OF PREPARING AND DISTRIBUTING SUBVERSIVE PROPAGANDA.

6. COMMENT: GARCIA HERNANDEZ' VISIT TO BASQUE AREA SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN WELL ORCHESTRATED TO MAKE POINT THAT GOS DETERMINED TO PRESERVE LAW AND ORDER IN AREA AS WELL AS TO PRESERVE LIBERAL REFORM AT LOCAL LEVEL AND TO RESPECT LOCAL TRADITIONS AND PRIVILEGES PROVIDING THAT THEIR EXERCISE WAS CONSISTENT WITH BASIC POLICIES OF CENTRAL GOVT. PRESENCE OF SECURITY CHIEF IN MINISTER'S PARTY AND RECENT SHOW OF FORCE BY CIVIL GUARD IN BASQUE AREA WAS ANOTHER REMINDER THAT PUBLIC ORDER REMAINS KEY CONCERN OF CENTRAL GOVT IN BASQUE COUNTRY. CARROT HELD OUT TO BASQUES ON THIS OCCASION IS PROSPECT FOR MORE LEEWAY FOR LOCAL GOVT WITH OPTION TO CHOOSE INDIGENOUS LOCAL LEADERS UNDER PROPOSED LOCAL GOVT REFORM.

7. FIRST VICE PRESIDENT HAS CONSOLIDATED HIS POWER AND INFLUENCE IN PAST YEAR, PLAYING KEY ROLES IN CHOOSING NEW LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MINISTERS DURING CABINET CRISIS OF OCT 1974, AND FEB 1975. HE PREVIOUSLY VISITED CATALONIA AND SOUTHERN SPAIN, BUT VISIT TO RESTIVE BASQUE AREA HAS RECEIVED MOST WIDESPREAD PUBLICITY. POLITICAL OBSERVERS SEE GARCIA HERNANDEZ AS MAN-BEHIND-THE -SCENES IN KEY ACTIONS OF ARIAS NAVARRO GOVT; HE HAS DEMONSTRATED WILLINGNESS TO USE THE EXTENSIVE POWERS AT THIS DISPOSAL DECISIVELY BUT GENERALLY MAINTAINS POLITICAL PROFILE LOWER THAN HIS INFLUENCE IN INNER COUNCILS WOULD WARRANT. STABLER

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